

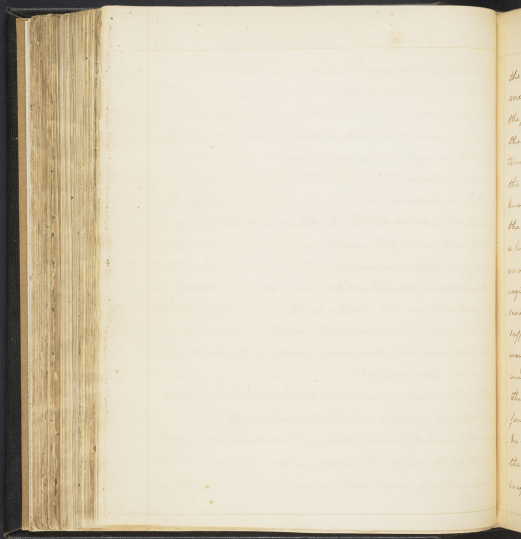
A Dissertation
 on Menstruation
 by H. McCall
 of Kentucky
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A dissertation upon Menstruation

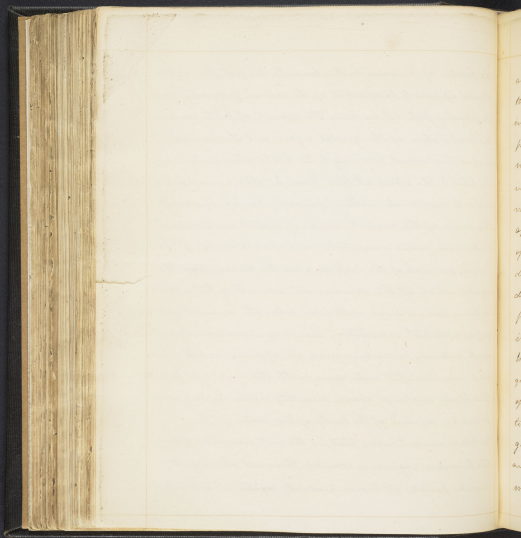
Menstruation is a monthly discharge which takes place from the uterus, of every healthy woman, whose genital organs are well formed, on her arrival at the age of puberty. At this time the organs of generation develop themselves completely. The uterine vessels, which are "serpentine and peculiarly tortuous; contract themselves and become enlarged in their caliber, in proportion to the enlargement of the organs, through which, they are distributed. In this rapid development of the parts, subservient to the function of generation, a much greater supply of blood, is required from the general circulation. This increased quantity of blood is derived from the spermatic, and hypogastric arteries. The structure of the uterus, and the circuitous direction of its vessels, is admirably adapted, for the retention of the blood until the all important secretion of the menstrual fluid can be accomplished.

That the menses are a secretion, I infer from the uterus being analogous, to a gland in its structure, and from the difference found to exist, between this fluid, and blood drawn from any other part of the system. The secretory action of the uterus, has been ably, and satisfactorily established by the present Professor of

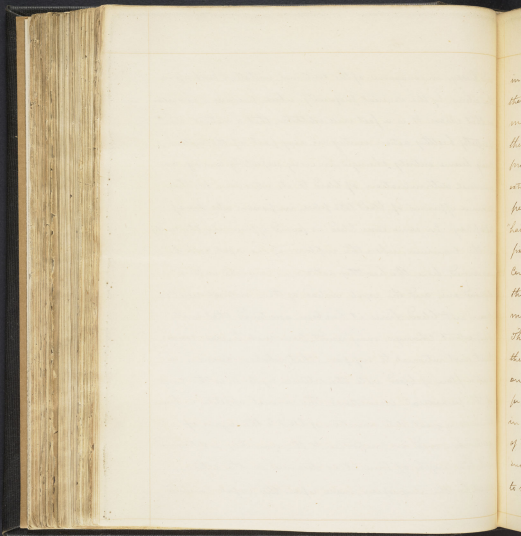


the practice of medicine in this country. The first flow of the
menses appears to be dependent on the venereal propensity, from
the following facts. 1st we know the venereal appetite increases
the temperature of the genital organs, and this increased
temperature must be owing to the greater determination of
the blood to the uterus at that time. 2nd No woman has been
known to menstruate, without previously having experienced
the desire of the male. 3rd "Women of a robust constitution, and
a libidinous nature" menstruate much more copiously" 4th In
many animals of the inferior order, the discharge from the
vagina, which at the commencement, was nothing but a mucous
secretion, becomes tinged with blood when the venereal propensity
supplies a violent excitation. This sanguineous excretion,
would certainly, never have made its appearance, had a free
and uninterrupted intercourse with the male, been permitted.
This bloody discharge obviates menstruation so long, as the
female is deprived of the society of the male.

In Libermann & Linfer, that, as the first excretion from
the human vagina, is colourless, thin, and returning at
irregular periods, it becomes gradually regular in its periods

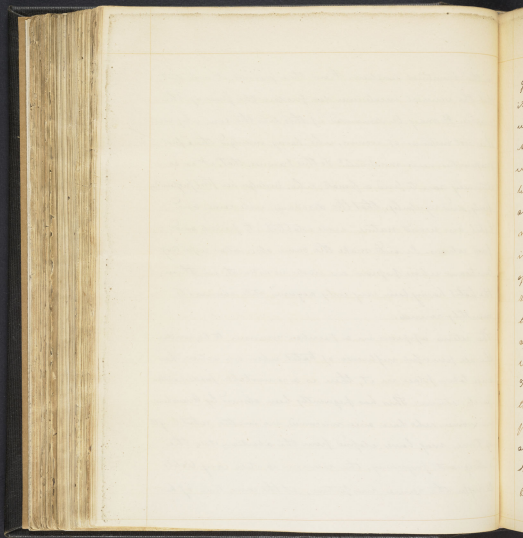


and bloody, in consequence of the continual irritation kept up in the uterus, by the venereal propensity, which, produces a relaxation in that viscus. It is a fact well established, that a natural and perfectly healthy action existing in any part of the system, may become entirely changed in every aspect, by causing an unusual determination of blood to its situation. In this manner effusions of blood take place, in persons who die of apoplexy. In some cases blood is found effused in the cavity of the cranium, when the rupture of no vessel can be discovered, here the healthy action, is converted into a discordant one, and the vessels instead of their natural secretion pour out blood, since it has been ascertained that such important changes, may result, from such trivial causes. Is it not rational to suppose, that, whatever increases a greater flow of blood into the uterine system, is the cause of this periodical evacuation? The venereal appetite is known to cause a great determination of blood to the organs of generation, and in proportion to the quantity determined, and the length of time it is detained in the uterus, must be the impulsion, made upon the vessels contained



in the menstrual secretion. From these premises, it is evident, that the venereal incalculum does produce the flow of the menses. It may be demanded if this was the case, why are there not instances of women, who having indulged their first propensities near menstruation? To this I answer, that, it is so extremely rare to find a female, who, indulges her first propensity freely, and regularly, that the discharge will come, and "habit and second nature" will establish its periods and fixed returns. I recollect to make the same observation respecting Courtesans whose passions are under no restraint, in them, the habit having been very early acquired, still observes its monthly returns.

The uterus appears in a peculiar manner, to be, under the all powerful influence of habit, when an action, has once taken place in it, there is a remarkable predisposition for its return. This has frequently been observed by Accidents in women, who have once miscarried, no matter what length of time, may have elapsed from the abortion till the subsequent pregnancy, the woman is still very liable to suffer the same misfortune, at the same time of her

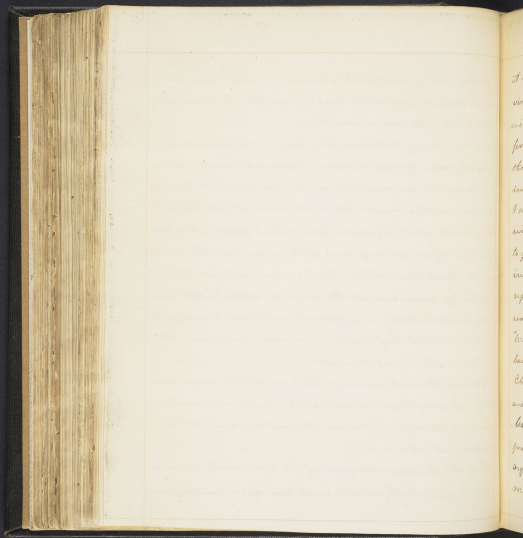


gitation and if she should miscarry twice in succession, it is extremely difficult to break the association of diseased action which originated from accident.

Another inquiry naturally arises here, if the venereal propensity was the cause of menstruation, why are all women more or less subject to corporal and mental derangement at that time: or why do they menstruate with pain at first? The first menstrual effort is painful, from a new action taking place in an organ deriving some of its nerves from the ramifications of the Great Sympathetic. The powerful influence of which system of nerves over all the range of organs through which they are distributed, is sufficiently established, to justify the opinion that they exert an immense power over the uterus and its appendages.

To prove the influence of the Sympathetic nerves, over the whole system, we need only mention the excruciating pain attending slight wounds penetrating any of the abdominal viscera.

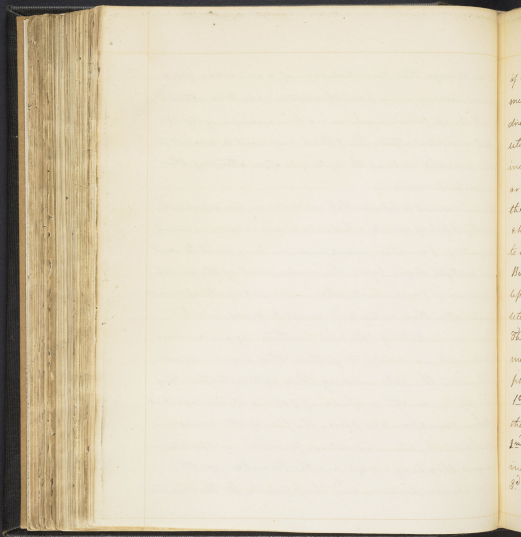
Since the Seminal ganglion of the Sympathetic nerves has been considered by Physiologists as the seat of our sensations, can



It is strange, that the introduction of a new action in a viscus receiving nerves from this system, should be attended with such phenomena, as we find accompanying the first menstrual effort? This I think sufficient to account for the disordered state of the system, so often attending this important secretion.

I am induced to believe that no woman ever menstruates, without feeling want, which she knows more or less destined to gratify, from these wants, or desires, being found to exist in a slight degree, before the development of the genital organs, and prior menstruation never making its appearance until after their entire and complete development.

"Women inhabiting cold and northern regions are more backward in menstruating, than they are, in temperate climates; the cold rendering their systems torpid, they are left under the impulse of passions of the repressed kind. When conception takes place, the flow of the menses is prevented, by the new action produced in the uterine organs, they being engaged in the formation of the membrana decidua, and the placenta for the new-born



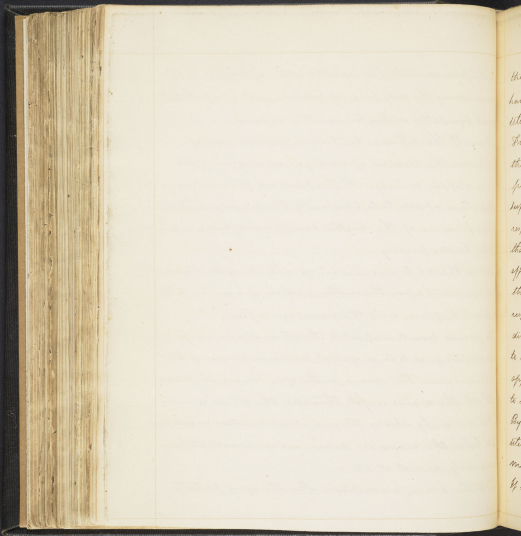
of the "folia in situ". The prevention of the appearance of the menses, during the early period of lactation, must be referred to the direct sympathy existing between the mamma and the uterus. If the uterus is kept in a constant state of irritation, the secretion of milk goes on very imperfectly or is stopped entirely. At this period all the sensations of the uterus appear to be transferred to the mamma, and the chief pleasure of the mother consists in suckling her infant to her twofold progeny.

But as the child increases in age and strength, it becomes less dependent upon the mother, a return of sensations to the uterus takes place, and the menses again flow.

The ovaries seem to impart to the uterus the power of menstruating, or to be of essential service in producing this phenomenon. The reasons for this opinion are the following

- 1st As the ovaries unfold themselves the uterus commences that action by which, the menstrual secretion is accomplished
- 2nd When the ovaries are diseased, menses menstruate very irregularly, or not at all.

- 3rd If the ovaries are destroyed after the age of puberty

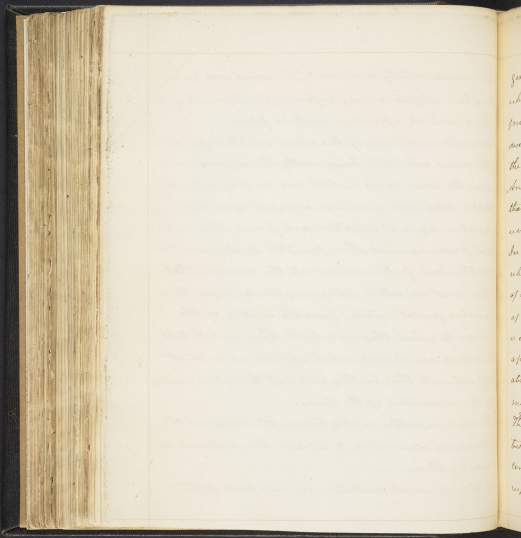


the nerves entirely disappear. 4.th In women whose ovaries have been extirpated during infancy no development of the uterus and its appendages ever takes place.

From the distribution of the nerves and blood vessels of the ovaries and testicles being exactly the same, and derived from the same source in both sexes, we may rationally suppose they exert a similar influence upon their respective organs of generation, and furnish them with that power, by which, their complete development is effected. I am further drawn into the opinion that they exert an action every way similar, upon their respective genital systems, from the identity of the diseases to which they are subject. They are both liable to dropsy and sclerosis, which affections are in strict opposition to that healthy action of the system necessary to the reproduction of the species.

By the sympathy existing between the ovaries and the uterus, we are enabled to explain their influence in menstruation.

If there is much irritation in any part of the



generative system that part becomes a centre of fluxion towards which, all the humours and sensations flow, and this in proportion to the sensibility of the part so affected, if this diseased determination is directed to the ovaries, it must destroy the secretory action of the uterus, while it exists.

And hence the opinion propagated by the illustrious Cullen that "in most cases of obstinate amenorrhoea, the ovaries were the original seat of the disease."

In some cases of amenorrhoea, there exists an organized substance, which prevents the flow of the menses. May not the vessels of the uterus form this membrane or substance, in consequence of a diseased determination of blood to the ovaries? Since it is evident this membrane does exist, menstruation cannot appear during its existence. As there is then, a mechanical obstruction to its flow, even admitting the formation of the membrane was not incompatible with that secretion.

The same obstruction has been said to prevent conception, but the evidence in support of this position is not entirely conclusive, since sympathy has been found to occupy so respectable a situation in the present theory of conception.

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Many of the diseases of women, which incapacitate them for conception, have been referred to menstrual derangement, this certainly is sometimes the case, when a disease exists in the uterus or in its appendages, in consequence of which the whole system becomes disordered from sympathy.

But I believe many of these diseases which have this effect are seated in the adjacent viscera. The spleen is found indurated in some cases of amenorrhoea, and this induration has been attributed to the suppression of the menses, yet I think we have evidence of the suppression of the menses being symptomatic of the affection of the spleen.

This evidence may be derived from examining men labouring under an induration of the same viscus, their external appearance is similar to that of women affected with menstrual obstruction, their countenances are sallow, their appetites depressed, and their whole systems exhibit evident marks of disease.

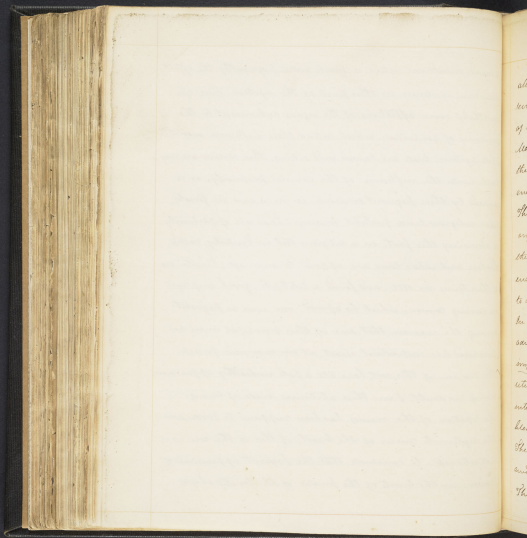
From the above premises, it appears that the induration of the spleen produces an action, so inimical to the health of the system, as to prevent the secretion of the menses.

Shapers

Diseased menstrual action is much more frequently the effect, -
than cause of disease in other parts of the system. There are
nevertheless some affections of the organs subservient to the
economy of generation, which, extend their influence over the
whole system, such are Cancer and Scirrus. These diseases are very
much under the influence of the venereal propensity, as is
evidenced by their frequent occurrence in men, and in females,
whose religious creeds prohibit marriage. I had an opportunity
of observing this fact, in a religious sect in Kentucky called
Shakers, and whose laws are opposed to marriage. I visited one
of their towns in 1816 and found a celebrated quack employed
in curing cancer, which he assured me were so frequent
among the women, that one of their principal men had
purchased his important secret at an enormous price.

The women of this sect, have all a pale unhealthy appearance,
arising no doubt, from their abstemious mode of living.

The operation of the menses has been supposed to predispose
the system to Cancer of the breast, if this is the case, is it
not reasonable to conclude, that the frequent appearance of
Cancer, in the breasts of the females of the Society above



alluded to, is caused by the derangement of the menstrual secretion, which derangement originates from the vice obscure of their rigid and pernicious laws?

May not the fatal ligation of the nerves be attributed to the gradual decay of the system, and the consequent want of energy in the uterine fibres?

This ligation is frequently the prelude to many diseases, which may originate from the sympathy existing between all the uterus, and the other viscera. The discontinuance of an action in a part exercised with much sensibility, predisposes not only that part to disease, but those likewise in direct sympathy with it.

In the phenomena of the ligation of the nerves, we may again ascribe to the ovarian influence, to see as the ovaries have all been impregnated or have lost their susceptibility for impregnation, the uterine cells and sinuses having no power to stimulate them into action, collapse, and become no longer able to receive the blood in such quantities as formerly.

The ovaries must impart to the uterus the power to conceive, and the cause of that defect which is to consummate conception.

Thus the ovaries fit the uterus for conception, and are the

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cause of the venereal appetite, which, I have endeavored to
prove is the cause of menstruation.

From the foregoing premises, I conclude that the sanguine
flow from the human vagina, like, that from the vagina,
of the inferior animals depends upon excitation of the
venereal appetite and that it has regular periods established
by habit.

